

Appendix L: Assessing Organizational Practices Across Structures, Policies, and Activities

Structural Practices (S)

Ratios: Youth spend at least part of their time at camp in one-on-one or small-group interactions. Examples of appropriate actions include the following:

- Incorporate more flexible scheduling to allow for informal interactions between campers and staff.
- Have older campers mentor younger campers.
- Assign staff to specific areas during free time to engage and guide campers.

Safe, Accessible Activities and Spaces: Activities and space are secure and supervised. Schedules of activities, available space, and staffing of activities are predictable and clearly communicated. Activities and spaces are physically accessible, offered during appropriate hours, and affordable to all participants. Examples of appropriate actions include the following:

- Install lights outside cabins, camp entrances, and retreat centers.
- Ensure clear, open communication about safety.
- Ensure that adequate spaces and equipment are available so campers have access to activities they are interested in or that are new to them.

Continuity and Consistency of Care: Structures like regular staff meetings and regular staff conferences exist to talk about camper issues and concerns. The same discipline system is used with staff and by staff with campers. Messages about how people treat each other at camp are consistent from all staff members. This translates into how campers treat each other. Examples of appropriate actions include the following:

- Post photos of staff with names in an accessible location so campers can learn staff names.
- Carefully match cabin staff with age groups.
- Use “Getting to Know You” discussion starters at tables in the dining hall for each meal.
- Create a “Get to Know You” card that campers and counselors fill out before camp and find creative ways to use it.

Policy Practices (P)

Ongoing, Results-Based, Staff and Organizational Improvement Process: The organization and all its participants regularly evaluate supports and opportunities and make adjustments in resource allocation, policies, and practices based on these assessments. Examples of appropriate actions include the following:

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- Adjust hiring procedures to recruit staff with the ability to develop strong relationships with and among campers, good activity skills, and strong teaching ability.
 - Change focus of staff training to include camper-centered approaches, youth-development issues, paying attention to each individual child, the concept of cabin bonding, and building “a family.”
 - Use time during staff orientation to develop and practice teaching skills instead of focusing on planning and purchasing supplies.
 - Train staff to involve youth in decision making.
 - Improve and institute more frequent staff evaluations focused on youth development.
 - Communicate past summer successes and challenges as an ongoing tool for staff development.
 - Use camper feedback on a regular basis.
 - Eliminate programs that do not meet camp goals or the interests of campers.

Flexibility in Allocating Available Resources: Staff, money, program supplies, space, and time are allocated according to agreed-upon principles of maximizing youth supports and opportunities. Examples of appropriate actions include the following:

- Plan programs during staff training and allocate resources after the planning is completed.
- Adjust camp activities if campers show no interest in something offered or show interest in something that’s not offered.

Community Engagement: The organization and its staff/volunteers and management are committed to linking youth to the local community and linking the organization to other community institutions and activities that support youth development. Examples of appropriate actions include the following:

- Participate in service projects in the local community.

Activity Practices (A)

High, Clear, and Fair Standards: The organization and its staff are clear about what is expected of the staff and what is expected of the organization. These expectations are clearly and regularly communicated and linked to predictable and consistently applied consequences. Examples of appropriate actions include the following:

- Enforce rules and codes of conduct with consistency.
- Create no more than six campwide rules/expectations and use them with all age groups.
- Work with camper/cabin groups to develop their own rules to live by.
- Develop and enforce a consistent policy for improving staff performance.

Range of Diverse, Interesting, Skill-Building Activities: Activities offered reflect and respect diverse interests, skills, and needs of youth participants. Examples of appropriate actions include the following:

- Have senior-camper-only activities.
- Set weekly camper goals with each camper or in small groups.
- Set daily camper goals in each activity with each camper or group.
- Create activity (e.g., swimming) record sheets to document progress.
- Focus intentionally with campers on their growth in the program (e.g., a “wheel” representing each of the camp goals is used to reflect what was accomplished in each goal area each day).
- Add progressive, concrete skill development into lesson plans and programs.
- Define core skills for each age group.
- Allow youth to chart progress toward goals.
- Establish a new evening program for mixed ages with more choice or new activities.
- Post daily schedules in each cabin/public space and post camper program-area choices in cabins.
- Provide early adolescent campers with unstructured but well-supervised hang-out time.

Youth Engagement: Age-appropriate strategies are used to involve youth in operations, governance, and identity. Examples of appropriate actions include the following:

- Have campers participate in setting cabin and camp rules and assist in developing consequences for rule breaking.
- Ask campers (and staff) how they want funds to be used.
- Use camp councils (in conjunction with camp administration) to design and plan usage of new activity space.
- Hold camper panel meetings during sessions.
- Initiate guidance in leader-in-training (LIT) and counselor-in-training (CIT) programs and empower them to create and run programs.
- Give older campers more management opportunities in the day-to-day running of camp.
- Have counselors ask campers for input on their upcoming week and then meet to plan the rest of the week.
- Have campers participate in schedule planning for their small group.
- Use one night a week for cabin activities that are camper planned.